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Centennial Celebration Planned

Next year, Belmont Abbey College will commemorate the 100th anniversary of its foundation with a year-long series of celebrations on campus. Planning is already underway for several special events during 1976.

There will be a weekend for Abbey alumni, an Ecclesiastical Day for area priests and visiting Catholic clergy, an Academic Day for the presidents and administrators of other colleges and universities, and an Ecumenical Day for representatives of the various religions. Many important dignitaries are being invited to help Belmont Abbey College celebrate its birthday.

The centennial year will focus on the first 100 years of the College's history, which began with the purchase of the Caldwell Plantation in Gaston County by the Reverend Jeremiah O'Connell shortly after the Civil War. A missionary priest who



Fr. Bradley

covered the two Carolinas and Georgia, Father O'Connell bought the land to be used to build a school. At his request, the Benedictine Monks of Saint Vincent's Archabbey of Latrobe, Pa., agreed to accept the land and found there a combination high school and college.

The first classes were held in October of 1876, with a student body of four. During succeeding years both the number of faculty and students grew, and a new dormitory building was erected in 1881 at what was then St. Mary's College. Five years later, St. Mary's was chartered by the State of North Carolina.

In 1913 the name was changed to Belmont

please see p. 5

But Can We Beat Notre Dame?

Fr. Bradley Bullish On Belmont Abbey

As of April 15, applications at Belmont Abbey College are up nearly 20 percent for Fall 1975 as compared to the same time last year. This is in spite of an increase in tuition costs, a sagging economy, and increased competition from both public and private colleges and universities.

"In case anyone has any doubts, higher education today is a buyers' market and the buyers - essentially high school seniors, present college students, and their parents - drive a hard bargain," says Father John Bradley, Abbey president. "There are two barometers that tell us if Belmont Abbey is passing the test. One is applications. The other is our retention rate.

In fall 1972, 73 per cent of the students who were eligible to return to Belmont Abbey did so. The following year, this figure had increased to 85

per cent. Last fall, 91 per cent of the Abbey's eligible students returned. This is considerably higher than the retention rate at most colleges and universities.

Father Bradley feels that we have every reason to feel encouraged about the future of Belmont Abbey College. "It's the present that concerns me. Because of the economy, we simply are not getting the needed financial support from corporations and private foundations to help balance our operating budget. This places a greater burden on our alumni."

With less than 2,000 senior college graduates, and the great majority of these under 40 years of age, Bradley agrees that the funding potential of Abbey alumni is definitely limited. "We have a number of very loyal alumni, many of whom can only contribute a few dollars each

year," Bradley commented. "We never question the size of our alumni contributions -- only the number. Wouldn't it be something if the percentage of contributing Belmont Abbey alumni matched our current student retention rate (91 per cent)? That's too much to expect, of course. Fifty-nine per cent of Notre Dame alumni, for example, contributed to their annual fund in 1974. Only two schools in the country had a higher percentage."

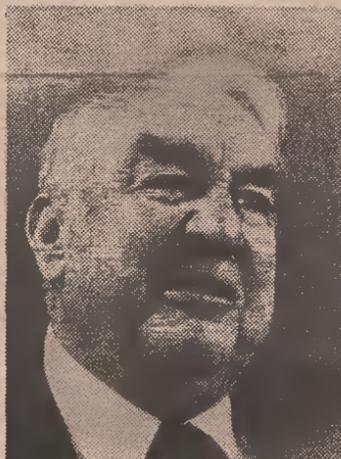
If you'd like to help beat Notre Dame's record, and you haven't contributed to the 1974-75 Abbey Annual Fund, here's what you can do:

1. Take the envelope enclosed with this issue of Crossroads.
2. Place therein whatever you can afford to contribute.
3. Mail it prior to May 31. That's when the 1974-75 fund drive ends.

Ervin To Speak At 97th Commencement

The Honorable Sam J. Ervin, Jr., retired United States Senator from North Carolina, will deliver the commencement address to the 1975 graduates of Belmont Abbey College at the graduation exercises on Sunday, May 18.

A concelebrated Solemn Academic Mass will be offered in the Belmont Abbey Cathedral. The Most Reverend James S. Rausch, General Secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, will preach the Baccalaureate sermon at the Mass. A luncheon for the graduates and their



Sam J. Ervin, Jr.

parents and guests will follow.

The academic Convocation for the conferral



Bishop Rausch

of honorary and academic degrees will be held in the Wheeler Center on the Belmont



Bishop Begley

Abbey College campus. Senator Ervin, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1954-1974 and acted

as chairman for the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities (The "Watergate Committee"), will be awarded an honorary degree during the ceremonies, as will Bishop Rausch.

Also receiving an honorary degree will be the Most Reverend Michael J. Begley, bishop of the Charlotte diocese. Mrs. Kathleen Price Bryan of Greensboro, N.C. will be presented an honorary degree in recognition of her advancements in education as well as her cultural and humanitarian activities.

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